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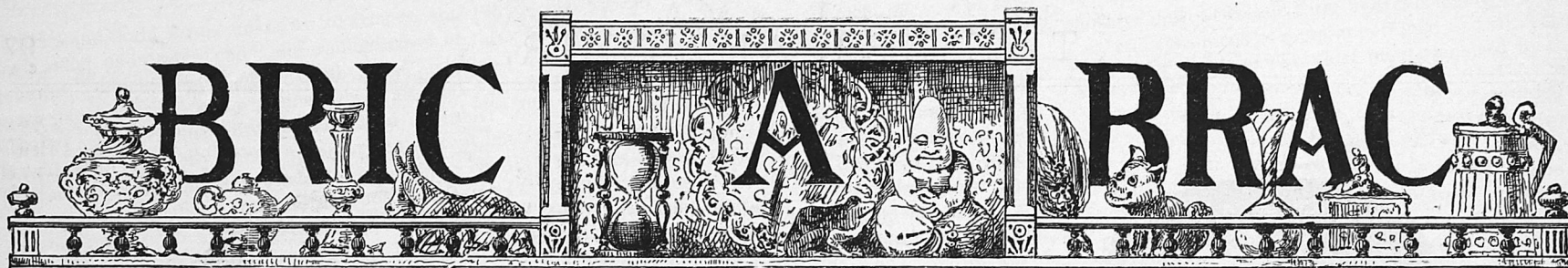
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## THE CLUNY MUSEUM.

A GLANCE AT THE FAÏENCES AND FURNITURE OF THE MIDDLE AGES.

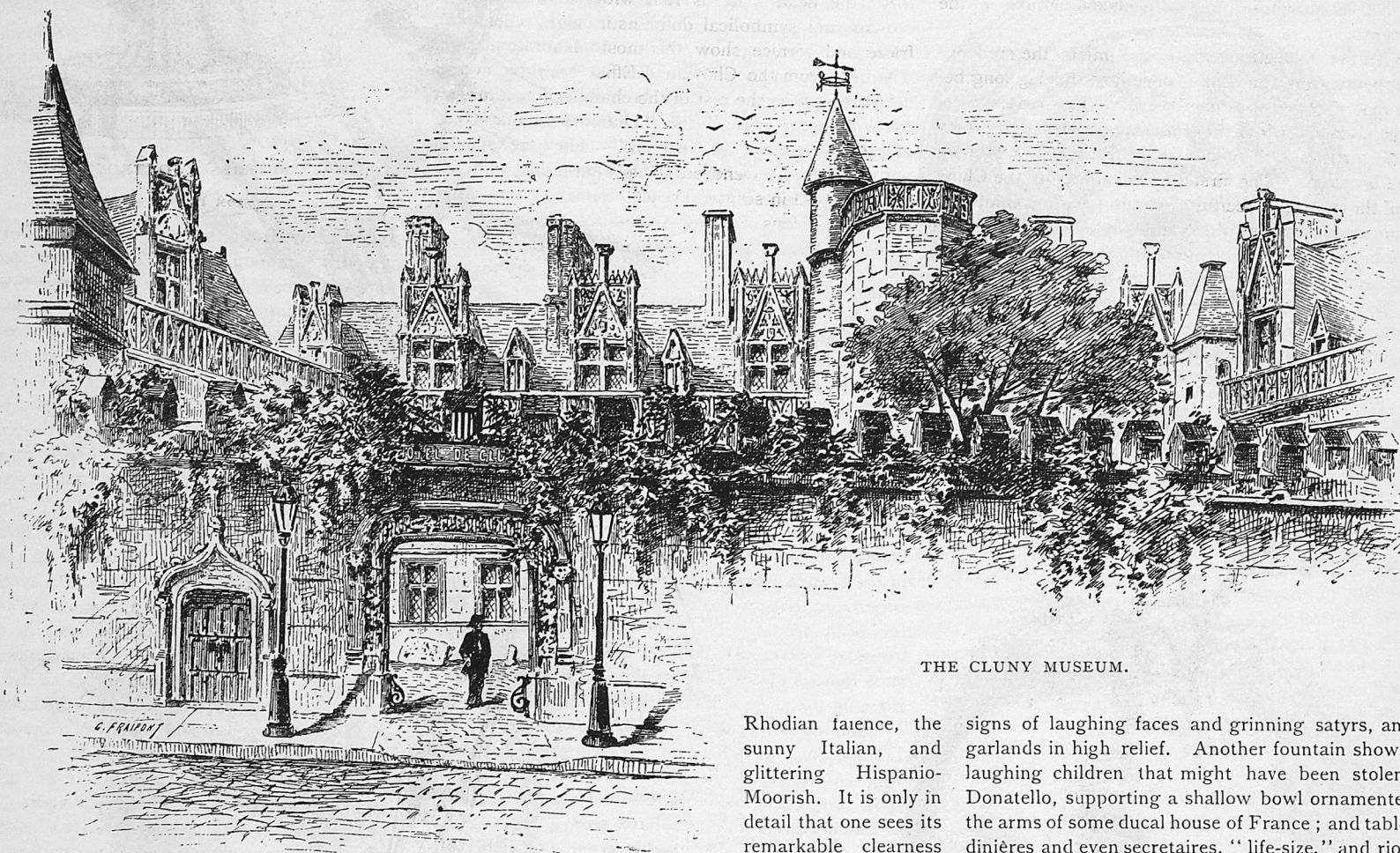


THE Cluny Museum represents the life-labor of Alexandre Sommerard, who loved the Middle Ages as the Medicean circle of Florence loved the golden age of Greece. In his youth so great was the ignorance of other art than Greek and Roman that the ruins of a feudal fortress were believed to be those of a druidical temple, and a cuirass of the sixteenth century was shown as the armor of Roland! It was given to Alexandre Sommerard to have a strong love for the despised Gothic. To this passion he devoted his fortune and life. The Hôtel Cluny, built in the Middle Ages upon

all the French faïences since the art was known in France, together with various German lusted and enamelled earthenwares, and wares of Holland, Sweden, Spain, and Switzerland.

Of the Oiron faïence, so vigilantly pursued by collectors nowadays, and of which only forty pieces are known to exist, the Cluny has but one specimen. This is a graceful cup, with a cover, and standing on a base. The ground color is the usual ivory white, ornamented with brown incrustations of arabesque. In French faïence the Cluny is most rich in Bernard Palissy and Rouen wares, although abounding in examples of Nevers, Moustiers, Lorraine, Strasbourg, Marseilles, Lille, Clermont-Ferrand, Sceaux, and the seventeenth century Paris faïence of Claude Révèrend. Cabinet after cabinet and credence after credence show the vigorous colors and curious motives of the Palissy, while show cases and walls display the fanciful forms and varying tints of the Rouen. In such masses as one sees at the Cluny the Bernard Palissy work strikes the observer as gloomy and depressing, especially coming as it does directly after the radiantly fantastic decoration of the

trinsic beauty, but also because of the influence it has always had on the ceramic art of the country. Some writers have denied that this ware dates any earlier than the seventeenth century, but the Cluny possesses documents proving that as early as 1542 tiles and plaques were manufactured for the Château of Ecouen, but for a long time were attributed to the ateliers of Bernard Palissy or some of his numerous pupils. A series of these tiles, bearing date 1542, and the words "à Rouen," is among the treasures of the Cluny. Between that date and the year 1646 one would gather from the Cluny collection no evidence that the ceramic art continued to be practised at Rouen, but of seventeenth century specimens there is no lack. To one acquainted with the Rouen ware only from the polychromatic plates and saucers of curiosity shops and artistic drawing-room walls, or at most from the perforated corbeilles and vinegar cruets in bold relief, that find their way into many collections, it is rather startling to run against such elaborate pieces as belong to the Cluny. One of the largest is a fountain over three feet in height, decorated in Renaissance taste with airy neo-pagan de-



THE CLUNY MUSEUM.

ruins of baths left by Julian the Apostate, was the sole monument of that period remaining in Paris. In it M. Sommerard placed his precious collection, there he wrote his great work, "Les Arts au Moyen Age," and there, in the picturesque old building with its mediæval turrets and Gothic wall-carvings, ivy-grown and tree-embowered, although hedged closely in by the busy city, the collection still remains. It was bought by the government after the owner's death in 1842, and is under the directorship of his son, who shared his labors, tastes, and travels.

As it exists at present the Cluny collection is a paradise for people with artistic hobbies, especially for lovers of faïence. Elegantly lodged in carved "armoires" or on sculptured palace tables and elaborately wrought cathedral credences, through a long succession of rooms, are faïences of Rhodes, Hispanio-Moorish plaques and vessels, lustrous and throwing off metallic glints; Sicilian-Arabic faïences, Persian in decoration; faïences from Caffagiolo, Deruta, Faenza, Urbino, Castel Durante, Gubbio, Abbruzzi and Naples—in fact, every faïence of Italy, supplemented by rich stores of

tion, the precision with which the colors are applied and the firmness of their adhesion, as well as the perfect fluidity of the enamel, which envelops them like a bath of sparkling spring water. Bernard Palissy is, of all ceramic inventors, the one that has been, and is, most persistently copied and imitated. Some of the modern imitations are so hideous, such brutal caricatures of the Palissy reptile, snail, fish, and vegetable decorations—always so conscientiously moulded after nature—that one grows almost to hate the original itself for having been the cause of such base counterfeits. It may reasonably be a matter for question if thousands of Palissy admirers would not, after all, like the ware just as well if every sluggish snail and bloated periwinkle were swept away from it, leaving only the modelled masques and dainty interlacings of corbeille and plate, which show so much more of manual and artistic skill and are free from any unpleasant suggestion.

The Rouen faïence takes always first rank in any enumeration of French ceramics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, not only because of its in-

Rhodian faïence, the sunny Italian, and glittering Hispanio-Moorish. It is only in detail that one sees its remarkable clearness of sculptural execu-

signs of laughing faces and grinning satyrs, and with garlands in high relief. Another fountain shows three laughing children that might have been stolen from Donatello, supporting a shallow bowl ornamented with the arms of some ducal house of France; and tables, jardinières and even secretaires, "life-size," and rioting in all the affluence of pseudo-classic decorations, dolphins, urns, Bacchus faces, birds, shells, lions, griffins, and Renaissance arabesques and garlands—astonish the humble collector, whose loftiest flights of imagination, as far as the Rouen ware is concerned, have not touched beyond palmed and lilled spice box, lambrequined sugar bowl, or, at loftiest, tall cider cruche showing Christian saint and pagan goddess in most mysterious propinquity.

In furniture as well as in faïence the Cluny Museum is rich. Thirteenth century furniture is extremely rare in France, only four specimens being noted by Viollet-le-Duc, as existing to-day. One of these is the unique and interesting "bahut" which stands facing the entrance of the first long room in the Musée de Cluny, and which is remarkable as the most ancient and beautiful example of its kind in existence. It is curious to look at that dark box of gloomy, glintless carved oak, and to think that it antedates the discovery of our western world by perhaps two hundred years. Gothic arches and mailed warriors, chimerical animals, and birds neither of earth nor air, love scenes and tournaments, battle standards and musical instruments, prize



fighters and floral forms unknown to science, stand in high relief upon sides, ends, and vaulted cover of this "bahut," which, in spite of its quaint name and elaborate decoration, is only a clothes chest after all. A "bahut" was the most primitive household "meuble." It was shaped exactly like a sailor's chest, except for its vaulted roof, and was used to hold family linen and raiment. Without the vaulted roof it was used also as table or bench, sometimes even as bedstead. In fact it was the principal and most indispensable "meuble" of castle or cottage.

Much more numerous than "bahuts" are the credences lining the walls and supporting the wealth of faience of the Cluny. The credence is an ecclesiastical "meuble" which we may look upon as the remote ancestor through generations of "dressoirs" and "buffets," or sideboards, of our modern "étagère." It was an affair of two stories, the lower one an open shelf, upon which the upper was superimposed by means of columns or pilasters. The upper story was an oblong box, and the "meuble" was in cathedral use near the altar to support the articles necessary for the celebration of sacraments. With its adoption into secular life its upper story grew tall and developed panelled doors and interior shelves to hold dishes. As credence it was always treated as a "meuble de luxe," with the richest decorations possible. Many of those in the Cluny bear armorial designs mingled with Christian mottoes. Others are carved in every style, from the Annunciation or the ascetic saint of the fifteenth century, to the neopagan sensuousness of Leda, or the royal mistress (as virginal Diana whose chastity needs no clothes) of the sixteenth.

With the sixteenth century specimens, the credence disappears from the Cluny collections, having long before that received the magic spell of the Renaissance, which changed it into the elaborate cabinet upon which all the artistic skill and taste of European workmen were lavished. The first French cabinet in the Cluny is of the sixteenth century, sculptured in walnut and ornamented with seven caryatides in relief. It is said to have been carved by the monks of the Abbaye of Clairvaux, and is entirely changed from the credence in having the lower story inclosed instead of open. The Cluny is rich in cabinets, Venetian, Florentine, Flemish, and Spanish, but to describe them would be about as easy as drawing a pen sketch of the Aurora Borealis.



SÈVRES CANDELABRUM.

FROM THE SAN DONATO COLLECTION.

The "armoire," which has sent not a very numerous progeny to our many-closeted western world, as the old-fashioned clothes press, but whose descendants—still called "armoires"—are in almost every bourgeois French home to-day, was also originally an

ecclesiastical "meuble," early adopted into domestic life and used to inclose objects which, because of their form, could not be kept in "bahuts." In their earliest days, just as now, they opened with two great doors, and were of extreme simplicity. They were apparently regarded merely as convenient but not luxurious "meubles," and early subsided into their present modest place. The Cluny possesses a large number, elegantly but simply decorated, of the eighteenth century. They are catalogued as "Normandy armoires" and are interesting as representing the taste of well-to-do provincial families, whose household gods, although of bourgeois character, were highly esteemed, and transmitted as heirlooms. This series of armoires may be remembered as holding the Lindos (Rhodian) faience in which the Cluny is so rich.

The bed has existed from time immemorial. The Cluny has, among others, one monumental affair of Francis the First's time, always pointed out by the attendants as the bed of that monarch himself. Several from the Château d'Effiat, the family home of that unfortunate youth Cinq-Mars, give an excellent idea of the excessive sumptuousness of aristocratic dwellings in the seventeenth century. The first-named bedstead bears a placard requesting visitors not to touch it, which request every passer-by immediately obeys by ramming forefinger or thumb into its embossed velvet coverlet, instantly withdrawing the same with a sense of physical shock and mental surprise at the adamant substance beneath that royal velvet. The canopy is supported by figures of Mars and Victory; the head board is rich with carvings of ducal crowns and symbolical dolphins in high relief, while frieze and cornice show the most elaborate designs. The beds from the Château d'Effiat are three in number, known with the rest of the chamber furniture as of the "chambre verte," the "chambre du maréchal," and the "chambre du cardinal." They are splendid with embossed Genoese velvets alternating with silks embroidered in sculptural relief. Somehow they almost seem conscious of being splendidly dressed, like an opulent society dame in a company of plainer ladies.

M. B. W.

## GEMS FROM THE DOUBLE SALE.

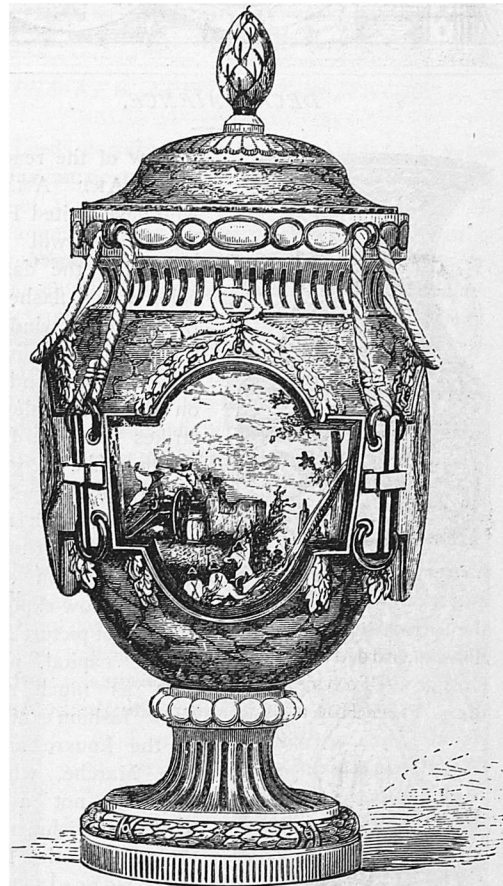
At the sale of the famous Double collection of works of art in Paris last spring—as we stated at the time—the remarkable pair of old Sèvres porcelain vases, painted with scenes commemorating the Battle of Fontenoy, were reported as sold at the extraordinary price of \$34,000. We now learn from our London contemporary, *The Artist*, that this purchase, which rumor connected with the name of the daughter of the President of the French Republic, probably was not genuine. It is believed that the vases were bought in by the executors of M. Double; but "the bona fide bids must have exceeded £6000 (\$30,000)." The Fontenoy vases are such famous pieces that the illustration given of one of them on this page will doubtless be found interesting.

From the same sale we found, during a recent visit to London, at the gallery of Mr. Edward Joseph, the well known dealer in New Bond Street, one of the most interesting and beautiful examples of fine old Dresden porcelain that we have seen. The object is a Louis XV. clock, with characteristic "rocaille" ornaments of that period in chased and gilt bronze, representing an organ, on a platform in front of which, on a series of steps, is an orchestra of four rows of comical monkey-faced musicians, twenty figures in all, each about six inches high. Festoons of flowers of fine old Dresden, gracefully modelled and artistically colored, adorn the sides of the organ. The whole thing is fifty-two inches high and thirty-four wide, and is supported on a handsome mahogany stand. At two minutes to the hour the organ plays an old-fashioned measure, quite in keeping with the quaint Louis XV. costumes of the simian band. This truly remarkable piece came from the Château de Rambouillet, and belonged to the Duchess of Maine.

## SALES OF RARE CHINA.

THE last few months have been remarkable for the important sales of old Sèvres that have taken place in London and Paris. The collections of Colonel Grant, Mr. Martin Smith, Mrs. Grinnell, Mr. Bale, and M. Double comprised about 300 lots; but there is no sign of

drugging the market. Old Dresden also, as *The Artist* remarks, "has this season quite held its own, very small groups of two and three figures bringing £30 and £40, and specimens of more importance and character £200 and £300; the two chief points required by the



SÈVRES "FONTENOY" VASE.

FROM THE DOUBLE COLLECTION.

cognoscenti being that the date be that of Kändler's period, i.e., about 1730-60, and that the decoration has not been added since to give a false value to the groups. Many of these existed in the white, having for some slight fault been put aside and left undecorated by the factory. The detection of subsequent decoration by skilful hands, commanding as they do very high prices for this work, is by no means easy; and it is curious to see how in some cases the bidding of dealers and amateurs will follow the lead of some two or three who have the reputation of being the best judges in these matters."

Some specimens of old Sèvres and Dresden china were sold at Christie's in London at the following prices: Two old Dresden vases and covers, fruit and flowers in relief, mounted in ormolu, 20 inches high, sold for £404; a feuille-de-choux pattern dessert service of old Sèvres, painted with bouquets of flowers, 80 pieces—£970; a beautiful cabaret, gros bleu ground, painted with cupids in medallions, with two handles and open worked border, teapot and cover, sucrier, and cup and saucer, £446 5s.; a fluted two-handled jardinière, gros bleu, white and gold, painted on each side with flowers in medallions, £189; a pair of small vases, with pierced necks and covers painted with festoons of flowers and chintz pattern decoration, £598 10s.; a pair of oviform turquoise vases and covers, pierced necks, painted with bouquets suspended from ribands, in medallions, £441; an oviform vase and cover, deep blue ground, painted with figures and cattle, gilt open-work handles, £210; an oblong shaped jardinière, with division, turquoise ground, with group of fruit in medallion, £162 15s.; a pair of jardinières, turquoise ground, with white and gold scroll handles, medallions of figures and flowers, £152 5s.; a pair of seated figures of children, colored and gilt, of old Sèvres, 6 inches high, sold for the unprecedented price of £556 10s.

At another sale at Christie's, of Dresden of the early period, a group, about six inches high, consisted of three small figures—a lady seated in the hooped dress or farthingale of the period, holding a pug dog under her arm, a gentleman standing by, and a negro in attendance. The negro was minus both arms, and yet the group sold for £170, and was afterward bought by another dealer for £195 (about \$975). It is more than probable that by this time some collector has paid as much as twice this price for it,